

**City of Gig Harbor Planning Commission
Minutes of Work-Study Session
November 15, 2007
Gig Harbor Civic Center**

PRESENT: Commissioners Jim Pasin, Harris Atkins, Jill Guernsey, Joyce Ninen, Theresa Malich, and Dick Allen. Commissioner Jeane Derebey was absent. Staff present: Jennifer Kester, Tom Dolan, and Diane Gagnon.

CALL TO ORDER: 6:00 p.m.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Minutes from September 20th and November 1st, 2007.

Commissioner Joyce Ninen asked for clarification of a sentence on page 4. It was decided to remove the sentence.

MOTION: Move to approve the minutes of September 20th as amended.
Allen/Ninen – motion passed unanimously.

Commissioner Harris Atkins pointed out a typographic error on the last page and asked that the specific issues he had cited regarding the work plan be referenced.

MOTION: Move to approve the minutes of November 1st as amended.
Ninen/Atkins – Motion passed unanimously.

Commissioner Guernsey asked that the amended minutes be sent out to everyone.

1. City of Gig Harbor, 3510 Grandview Street, Gig Harbor WA 98335

Senior Planner Jennifer Kester stated that the goal of the meeting was to continue the discussion on underground garages and perhaps get a recommendation to the City Council as to what (if anything) should be done in regard to this issue.

Ms. Kester went over what issues they had discussed prior. Mr. Pasin stated that he would like everyone to voice their beginning thoughts. Ms. Kester began by reading Jeane Derebey's e-mail, noting that she had stated that she did think there should be different standards for the downtown and waterfront areas as opposed to other parts of town. Additionally, Ms. Derebey's e-mail stated that possibly the numbers of stalls could be limited and that there should be a discussion of the entrance location to any underground garage. In regard to the definition, Ms. Derebey stated that she did want to look at what would be considered the grade to be measured from and what was underground. She also stated in her e-mail that she would remove the underground area from the gross square footage only if below grade.

Mr. Atkins stated that he agreed with much of what Ms. Derebey had said in her e-mail and that he had done some research on other communities. He stated that he liked the idea of underground garages and may consider exempting other requirements for example exceeding foot print requirements if doing an underground garage. He said he was not quite as sure about that when talking about a waterfront zone and stated that we need to be sure they are appropriate there. Mr. Atkins cautioned that they needed to be sure that they don't disrupt the current character of the neighborhoods. Additionally he said he would like to look at each of those definitions, but he was not sure he agreed with the definition of grade and what constitutes a basement or underground.

Ms. Guernsey expressed that she did not have a problem with underground garages but they may not be appropriate everywhere and felt that some regulation was needed.

Commissioner Dick Allen stated that underground parking is about intensity of use and it promotes the intensity of use. He stated that he could see it in DB or in commercial areas but not in the waterfront areas. He said that along the waterfront there are no front or rear setbacks and no restriction on impervious since the tidelands usually provide that, so it allows for more intense use. Mr. Allen felt that to consider underground parking in those waterfront areas would intensify the uses and noted that this is a mixed use area with R-1 zoning across the street.

Mr. Pasin stressed the need to look at the downtown core and the objectives that they have then ask the question if we want to maintain an old environment that may die or create a new environment with more life and parking is an important part of that. He went on to say that the other part of the downtown is that there is limited land and do you want to pave it over for parking. Mr. Pasin noted that some of the definitions have been troubling for some time, and noted that there is a difference between residential and commercial. He then asked about a basement in a commercial building and emphasized that there needed to be areas like that. Mr. Pasin went on to discuss what is finished grade and original grade and noted that here are some areas where special applications are necessary as we have slopes that are not really natural due to how a road was put in. He stated that he thought it was impractical to say there is a maximum number of parking spaces for a use. He then spoke about how he hoped they could get some input from the community and especially from the Main Street Association.

Joyce Ninen said that she was perplexed by the City Attorney's memo where she brought up the maximum parking requirements and asked if the main idea was to manage storm water. Ms. Kester said yes, storm water, aesthetics and encouraging transit options. She asked about how it works in Pierce County and was it tied to underground parking and Ms. Kester said no, it was just parking in general. Ms. Ninen said she was in favor of underground parking and she felt that we needed to look at alternatives to above ground parking especially in commercial areas. She said it doesn't necessarily have to be 100% underground and didn't feel that it needed to be included in the gross floor area. Tom pointed out that it couldn't be 100 percent

underground and she agreed that it wouldn't have to be more than 50% underground. She asked about the definitions of existing grade and finished grade and suggested that we look at definitions from other jurisdictions.

Ms. Malich said she had no problem with underground garages in the downtown and thought they should not be included in gross floor area but it should be looked at as to where they are allowed. She stated that the definitions do need to be looked at. Additionally she noted that the downtown definitely needs more places to park and the good way to do that would be to put the parking underground.

Ms. Kester noted that on the first page of the packet dated January 12th were the items that were part of the original motion and in the Memo dated January 25th were the questions for discussion. She then asked the Planning Commission to address the question of where is the legitimate public purpose in regulating something underground.

Ms. Guernsey stated that there is more involved in aesthetics besides what you can see. Ms. Malich stated that people are concerned about the size and scale of buildings on the waterfront. Mr. Atkins noted that if you put the parking underground perhaps the use is expanded. The size of the structure is the same, but the use is increased. Ms. Guernsey said that she believed intensity of use was not the same as the size of the structure, intensity of use is the difference between single family and multi-family. She went on to say that the use is defined by the zoning code and the use is regulated that way, the only thing that is changed is the design of the structure. Ms. Ninen noted that when you calculate the square footage of a house for tax purposes you don't count the garage. Mr. Atkins noted that the facility would have more utility if you can have the same size structure but now you don't have to include the garage. Additionally he noted that the intensity of use is controlled by other regulations. Ms. Kester agreed, noting that you have to show traffic, sewer and water concurrency. It doesn't change the use, but it may change the amount of use. Ms. Guernsey said that most jurisdictions refer to intensity when discussing the types of use not the amount of use. She further illustrated by saying if someone was doing a professional office building and they have a square footage limitation, we don't say you can't have more than so many offices. Mr. Pasin said that we have vacant land today because they can't meet the parking requirement and do we want to leave the downtown area with these vacant parcels by not allowing underground parking.

Chairman Theresa Malich said that she was hearing a consensus about allowing the underground garages in DB. Ms. Kester said that they had discussed that at some point and that they had decided that the waterfront zones should be more limited and that underground garages could be allowed in other zones. Mr. Pasin said that the definition of gross floor area should be redone and that underground garages should not be included in gross floor area. Mr. Atkins stated that the only reservation he had about the three waterfront zones was that we might somehow allow buildings to become larger and a lot of time has been spent on these size restrictions. He went on to say that he didn't see anything that would cause that to occur, but wanted to be sure. Ms. Kester said that a lot of the information on building footprint size was calculated using

buildings without underground garages. Ms. Malich noted that sometimes parking lots allow view corridors. Ms. Kester further explained how the data for the building size analysis was calculated. She went on to say that today's code actually creates smaller homes than what was allowed historically. Mr. Dolan pointed out that we are talking about DB, the three waterfront zones, RB1 and B2 where there are gross floor area limitations. Ms. Kester noted that there had been discussions of how this impacts a retail development having to include the garage in the B2. Mr. Dolan stated that it would be helpful to know what zones they would like to focus on. Mr. Allen said that he felt there had been community concerns about having another Russell building. Mr. Pasin said that he felt that this was a city wide issue and was just as important in other zones as in the waterfront. Ms. Guernsey stated that she had heard Ms. Kester asking if throughout the city underground parking would not be included in the gross floor area but we want to include it in the performance standards of some zones and asked how we would include it in the performance standards and Ms. Kester gave an example. She illustrated what the definition could say. Ms. Guernsey asked if the definition said that the gross floor area did not include underground garages then in some zones how would you deal with them. Ms. Kester said that you would have to have the underground garages included in the gross floor area in some zones and not in others. Ms. Guernsey said that we would need to discuss the basis for that, aside from visual. Ms. Kester agreed and referred to question #1. Mr. Pasin pointed out that the uphill side of Harborview is R-1 and WR on the other side. He went on to ask why you would allow an underground garage on one side and not on the other. Ms. Ninen answered because of scale and talked about matching new to existing in order to maintain the scale of the neighborhood. Mr. Allen said that the pedestrian who walk along that street are looking at the water not over at the R-1. Ms. Ninen noted that if you are on the waterfront paying huge taxes you should be able to use the property to the fullest extent. Mr. Allen said that he didn't think people would actually park in a dark garage, causing more street parking.

Ms. Guernsey talked about scale and the impact on the aesthetics of the community; it is more than just appearance and size. Ms. Ninen noted that not all lots are suitable for underground garages.

Chairman Malich called a 5 minute recess at 7:22 pm. The meeting was reconvened at 7:30.

Ms. Kester reminded everyone that they had left off with what was the public purpose for regulating underground garages. Mr. Allen said that the waterfront zones are all double use properties now, all those lots except two serve residential and moorage. The parking situation with that is unique because there is already more intensity and they are already receiving more allowances. Ms. Kester noted that some of those standards may change when we update our shoreline master program. Ms. Malich noted that there is a requirement for parking for each moorage slip. Ms. Kester stated that WM parking requirements are different from the other waterfront zones. Ms. Ninen said that the thoroughfare activity that goes on in the waterfront area creates more traffic and pedestrian activity. One of the goals of the city is to encourage pedestrian

activity and that presents a consideration about ingress and egress. She further stated that the DB really needs some breaks when it comes to parking and emphasized the need to get the input from the main street group. Mr. Atkins pointed out an article from the Gateway editorial section that talked about parking. Mr. Dolan said that the main street group had stated that one of their first priorities will be to do a parking study of the downtown. Ms. Kester noted that also some of these larger questions will be part of the downtown sub area plan. Ms. Ninen asked if the shoreline master program changes could change the ability of someone to put in an underground garage. Mr. Dolan said that this conversation will drive what happens in the shoreline master program. Discussion continued on the shoreline master program update.

Ms. Pasin said that the input from the main street group had to be weighed against the people who own the buildings in that area. Ms. Kester agreed and emphasized that the council will ultimately decide.

Ms. Kester said that she would bring a new definition of gross floor area excluding garages. Mr. Pasin asked about basements, stairwells, etc. Ms. Kester further explained the definition. Mr. Atkins said that he would just like to deal with the portion that is underground.

Mr. Allen asked what has happened that has caused Council to bring this back before the Planning Commission. Ms. Kester said that there had been several projects that illustrated how the current standards worked and weren't necessarily the result that council was hoping for. She also noted that there had been proposals that haven't gone through because of these issues. Ms. Malich emphasized that the people don't want huge buildings. Mr. Pasin stated that the definition needs to address these utility rooms, etc. Mr. Atkins asked why when we are trying to examine the underground issue. Ms. Kester clarified that if something is underground then it shouldn't be included in the gross floor area. Mr. Pasin said that he didn't think the equipment room should count regardless. Ms. Kester reminded everyone that the council's direction was to look at underground garages. She stated that if the Planning Commission wants to express some further desire to look at other issues then she would have to get Council's blessing. Ms. Kester read from the motion where it addressed underground basements. Ms. Malich said she just wanted to deal with the underground portion of buildings. Ms. Guernsey said that she also would like to see different examples of how underground is defined. Ms. Ninen said that we should be talking about underground structures not just garages. Ms. Malich said that elevator shafts and stairwells should not be exempted but underground should be exempted.

Ms. Kester reiterated that they want to talk about what is underground and will bring back examples and then they will discuss the waterfront issues. Mr. Dolan said that they would also look at what the building code defines, as when there are differences it can cause a problem.

2. 2008 Draft Work Program

Ms. Kester discussed the draft work program she had put together looking at a quarterly docket. Ms. Guernsey asked about the second bullet in the first quarter. Ms. Kester explained the council proposal. Mr. Dolan additionally explained some of the existing problems. Ms. Kester then went over the other proposals on the list. Discussion was held on organizing the quarters into binders for everyone. Ms. Kester said she would bring this draft work program to the Planning and Building Committee on the 3rd of December. She asked if there was anything that they felt should be moved into another quarter. Mr. Atkins asked when the Planning Commission could recommend comp plan amendments in order to meet the deadline. Tom Dolan said that we would need it by January. He said that we could add that subject to the next agenda to give everyone a chance to add any. Mr. Pasin said he would like to move the RB1 issue into the 2nd quarter. Ms. Guernsey agreed that it should be moved up. It was agreed to move residential design standards into the 2nd or 3rd quarter and put RB1 into the first quarter. Ms. Kester noted that on the second page there are things that are not in a quarter but need to be categorized at some point.

UPCOMING MEETINGS

December 6th, 2007 at 6:00 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: Move to adjourn at 8:15 p.m. Allen/Atkins – Motion passed unanimously.